

Briggs

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Encl: [7]
4405 S. Mayflower
Chicago, Ill.
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Dear Mr. J:

Thank you for your two notes. I regret the delay in answering them. I am trying to get my doctorate this February and am pressed for time. I am diligent in my correspondence to everybody. Nevertheless, here are a few notes concerning your last request - information on the religious life in contemporary Lithuania.

As I have told you earlier, several Lithuanian priests, including Bishop Vincentas Brizgys, met Lithuanian prelates that were participating in the Ecumenical Council in Vatican. Unexpectedly, I recently met Bishop Brizgys at a christening reception, where he provided several interesting observations from his conversations with the prelates of Lithuania. The prelates were in daily contact with the Catholic clergy from the West, especially with the Lithuanians since they moved in

The Lithuanian Spiritual Academy
in Rome Bishop Brizys suggests
that the information he conveys
is not printable. However,
I leave it up to your judgment.
Here is a paraphrase of the
Bishop's comments.

1) The Catholic Church is isolated
in various ways from youth, who
according to the prelates, are
extremely morally decreed. The
formal teaching of Catholicism is
almost impossible. The Church is
adjusting to this in various ways.
First of all, apparently there are
secret circles of young people
who are dedicated to the teaching
of religious truths to their peers.
There are strict entrance requirements
and a religious initiation into the
circles. There is no indication how
widespread such religious teaching
is. No doubt, the Lithuanian
prelates have a good idea about
it, but are unwilling to reveal
the details of this operation for
obvious reasons. There is no public

indication that the regime is aware of this. No doubt, the security organs must have some idea.

2) The religious youth has pooled their religious literature resources. They have published a book. The literature was collected from various sources. Bishop Briggs reported of a case where the regime publicly tried and convicted one "director of such library. No announcement of the trial appeared in the press. The woman that was convicted reportedly had said publicly at the end of the trial: "I have done my part now you do yours." This report appears to be authentic. She can be cited the name of the woman whose sister lives in Chicago.

3) How do the prelates from Lithuania view the future? Right now they are more optimistic because they believe that the

regime inevitably has to evolve slowly toward a more human system; that despite all Soviet pressure on religion, they have survived and, in fact, show signs of a mild revival; that the Communist system itself is showing signs of disintegration - the moral disintegration - and they believe that this will someday spell the doom to the Soviet system; that the Soviet experiment of developing Communist morality has failed.

4) The prelates from Lithuania were attended by a "journalist" who, according to the Bishop, was the political commissar of the delegate. In fact, I recall one of his dispatches appeared recently in Tien (in December). His interview with the prelates in Rome suggests the reasons for permission to the prelates to attend the Council. It is an interesting document on the regime and the Church for propaganda.

purposes. An important point of the interview was that the Roman Church, especially Pope John, has made for him more of a spiritual and social program, and evades the political crusades that Pope Pius XII carried on. The advice we to which the Lithuanian Catholic Church is put, and the Church is willing to accept this for the few privileges that it has, is the peace campaign support, support for the peaceful-coexistence line throughout the world. Also, in the recent attempts to discredit the "bourgeois nationalists", in the trials of the Nazi collaborators in the extermination of Jews and Russian POWs, the clergy also played a notable role in the public condemnation of atrocities.

So much for the information on the religious life in Lithuania. I expect to have a talk on

of these days with one of the
priests who was recently in Rome.
At the moment, however, I
am extremely occupied. I might
suggest that perhaps you could
make some arrangements to
have a more systematic report
on the meetings - ideas of the
prelates from Lithuania, when
they return for the next
session of the Ecumenical
Council. Please use your judgment
what can be used publicly,
if you find anything valuable
in the work.

I will give you an opinion
on the Elta - B edition as soon
as I can catch a breath from
my work. Also I will make it
a point to see Levison at
the beginning of February. By
now he should be somewhat
more affected by the freedom
of this country and should
theoretically be more willing to
discuss things.
Till next letter write to you []

in time for next week (5.11)